

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## United States Praises Pakistani Actions Against Extremists

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan praised the actions of Pakistan's government and military, saying military operations and apprehensions of leading Afghan Taliban figures inside Pakistan are contributing to efforts to remove Taliban fighters from the battlefield through reintegration.

"I just want to express my appreciation to the Pakistani government and its army for what it's doing," Ambassador Richard Holbrooke told reporters in Washington March 2. He mentioned the military offensives in Swat and South Waziristan, as well as the recent capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and other senior Afghan Taliban figures who have been living in Pakistan.

"They're doing these things in the face of enormous, overwhelming economic problems," including water and energy supplies. "We, in turn, are trying to increase our support for the Pakistanis," he said.

Holbrooke said that anecdotal information suggests that the Pakistani activities, along with operations in central Helmand province by Afghan security personnel and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), are causing some Taliban fighters to consider renouncing violence and returning to civilian life under the authority of the Afghan government.

"ISAF is reporting more and more people contacting them and saying, 'We want to talk about separate peace arrangements,'" Holbrooke said. "It isn't clearly quantifiable but it's logical to assume it's happening," he said.

"These are positive events, and they should be welcomed by anybody who opposes extremism and terrorism," he added.

U.S. relations with Pakistan's government and military are "much better today than they were 13 months ago" when the Obama administration began, he said.

According to a March 1 media note released by the State Department, Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province Elite Force received eight armored personnel carriers and surveillance equipment from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. The vehicles, as well as equipment such as night vision binoculars, global positioning systems and solar panels,

will support the force's actions against violent extremists, according to the note.

The note said U.S. civilian law enforcement assistance to Pakistan totaled \$49.5 million in 2009, including funds for equipping, training and rehabilitation of police facilities.

The Obama administration says it also welcomes the recent restoration of dialogue between Pakistan and India. Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley commended the leadership of both countries February 25, saying, "It was a courageous step to open the door to dialogue again," after previous efforts were disrupted by the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

"We certainly hope that both countries will build on this dialogue in the weeks and months ahead," Crowley said.

Holbrooke said both India and Pakistan have "legitimate security interests" in Afghanistan and in the region and that the United States is seeking to improve its relations with both.

"In New Delhi and in Islamabad, people come up to us and say, 'Oh, you're pro the other country. You're favoring one country over another.' That's not true," he said.

"Improved relations with one country is not at the expense of the other," he said. "By improving relations in both countries, we can move forward a general search for peace and stability in the region."

## President Obama Extends Sanctions Against Zimbabwe's Mugabe

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States extended sanctions on Robert Mugabe's regime for another year, saying that Zimbabwe's political crisis is unresolved, President Obama announced.

The United States has imposed travel sanctions and a freeze on the financial assets of Mugabe, his family and closest political aides; a freeze on all nonhumanitarian government-to-government aid; and a freeze on any transfer of defense-related items and services to protest a disputed presidential election and human rights abuses by Mugabe's government, the White House said in a message to Congress March 1. The European Union has also imposed sanctions on the country.

"I am continuing for one year the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the government of Zimbabwe and other

persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions," Obama said.

"The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved," Obama said.

Former President George W. Bush imposed the original sanctions with the declaration of a national emergency in 2003, saying that the actions by the Mugabe regime had "contributed to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe." There are no trade sanctions against Zimbabwe and the country does not qualify to participate in the U.S.-sponsored African Growth and Opportunity Act because of poor economic management and human rights abuses.

According to a 2009 report from the U.S. Congressional Research Service, the United States froze the financial assets held in the United States of 75 high-ranking Zimbabwe officials and Mugabe's wife, Grace. Nine companies and farms were added in 2004, and the list was further expanded in November 2005 to block the assets of 128 individuals and 33 entities. And more names were added to the list in December 2007 and again in November 2008, the CRS report said.

Mugabe has ruled the country since its independence in 1980. But after the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) won the majority of seats in the National Assembly in the March 2008 election, tensions began rising. Mugabe's re-election as president in a June runoff was regarded as illegitimate by the United States and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. In September 2008, after weeks of negotiations, Mugabe and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai signed a power-sharing arrangement aimed at resolving the political standoff. Tsvangirai had won more votes for president than Mugabe, but not more than the 50 percent needed to avoid a runoff.

Tsvangirai became the prime minister of a new coalition government following the power-sharing arrangement, and Cabinet positions have been filled among the nation's political parties.

Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomed Tsvangirai to Washington in June 2009, praising the progress made "in very difficult circumstance" since he joined the unity government with political rival Mugabe. Speaking after their meeting, Obama said Zimbabwe's power-sharing agreement "shows promise" and the United States is looking for ways to help Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwean people improve the country's democratic and economic future.

## United States Meeting Chilean Earthquake Aid Requests

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — Chile has identified specific assistance it needs as it begins assessing the full extent of the February 27 earthquake damage, and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is responding to its aid request and stands ready to offer additional assistance.

In remarks with Chilean president Michelle Bachelet March 2 in Santiago, Clinton said the United States can provide "not only solidarity, but specific supplies that are needed to help you recover from the earthquake."

The Chilean government has requested international assistance in the form of mobile bridges, field camps and hospitals, satellite phones, electric generators, saltwater-purification systems, autonomous dialysis systems, field kitchens and restaurants. Bachelet said money donations would help with the purchase of food and medication.

"Our objective is that cooperation will exactly meet and respond to ... our most urgent needs," Bachelet said.

She said at least 2 million people have been displaced, and an estimated 500,000 homes have been damaged, with an initial damage-cost assessment of \$30 billion. She added that her government is sending experts, such as engineers and architects, to the affected areas to evaluate the damage and help set priorities.

Clinton, who had planned to visit Chile before the disaster, delivered 25 of 62 satellite phones the United States is providing the country. She added that the Obama administration is sending eight water-purification units.

"We have identified a mobile field hospital unit with surgical capabilities that is ready to go. We are working to fill the need for autonomous dialysis machines. We are ready to purchase and send electricity generators, medical supplies, and are working to identify and send portable bridges so that some of the places that are remote that lost their bridges will be able to be reconnected to the country," Clinton said.

The United States will help in "any way that the government of Chile asks us to," she said.

"We are so grateful for what Chile did in Haiti. Your rescue teams were among the very best in the entire world. And we want to help Chile, who has done so much to help others," she said.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has sent a regional field adviser, a senior communications specialist and a field officer to Chile. The team is bringing 18 satellite telephones and communications training, according to a March 1 USAID fact sheet.

USAID has also provided an initial \$50,000 to fund the purchase and transport of emergency relief commodities to the country through the U.S. Embassy in Santiago. The fact sheet said further assistance is planned once the Chilean government and humanitarian groups conduct a needs assessment for the disaster zones.

U.S. search-and-rescue teams are on standby in case they need to be deployed to affected areas.

### **United States Guided by Principles on U.N. Human Rights Council**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will support the work that the U.N. Human Rights Council does well, and it will work constructively on aspects that need change, Under Secretary of State Maria Otero says.

Otero addressed the opening of the 13th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva on March 1. She presented three tenets that she said will guide U.S. participation: a commitment to principled engagement; consistent application of human rights law; and a commitment to the truth. Her remarks came during the opening of the 47-member forum's annual four-week session.

The United States joined the Human Rights Council in 2009, as Otero observed during remarks with reporters following her address.

"As you know, the United States is new to the council, but clearly we're not new to the struggle of universal human rights," she said. "We understand that the way the United States can lead is initially by example, and we don't have, as President Obama has often said, a perfect human rights record. We are not exempt from the standards that we are asking the Human Rights Council to set forth for all countries, and that we're trying to defend here in Geneva."

Navi Pillay, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, told delegates March 1 that the forum was conceived as a place where responses to inequality and repression could be crafted and advocated with the aim of building a world with more freedom.

"The review of the council, now forthcoming, would help

the international community to assess whether the fundamental principles of this body's mandate have been solidly and consistently upheld," Pillay said. When the council was created in 2006, it was intended to correct inequities that had largely stymied the former U.N. Human Rights Commission, but it was also crafted to achieve more rapid responses to human rights crises and to address more long-term chronic human rights abuses.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS LAW**

In addition to principled engagement, Otero said the United States is guided by a dedication to consistently apply international human rights law to all nations, including itself.

The United States will report to the Human Rights Council in November through the Universal Periodic Review. The review is a unique process that involves an evaluation of the human rights record of each of the 192 U.N. members once every four years. It is an opportunity for each nation to declare what actions it has taken to improve its human rights situation and meet its obligations. Members of the forum discuss and analyze the national reviews.

Otero, who is the under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs, said the United States is engaging in several months of consultations throughout the country to hear what civil society and community leaders say about the country's human rights record. "We will be considering the outcomes of these consultations in developing our report to the HRC and in considering what needs to and can change with respect to our record," she said.

The United States will be guided by a faithful commitment to the truth, Otero said, which means it will challenge resolutions and other actions of the council that it believes undermine the council's effectiveness. One of the missions of the council is to gather information on human rights conditions from all nations and make that public. Otero assured the council that the United States will support that mission while opposing efforts that might weaken it.

It is essential, from the United States' view, for the council to promote measures aimed at helping human rights in a timely way and that help real people, which had been a criticism directed at the U.N. Human Rights Commission before it was replaced by the new council. And Otero said the council must accurately assess the information collected by its investigators, and council members should not attempt to minimize problems or criticize messengers.

Otero told the forum that the United States is opposed to

any inflammatory speech and language that reinforces negative stereotypes based on religion, but does not support the concept of “defamation of religion.” She said the United States does not endorse calls to criminalize speech that is offensive to members of religious traditions.

“We strongly believe that censoring offensive ideas cannot and will not prevent racism or religious discrimination,” she said. “What we do support is efforts by states to take practical steps to address discrimination, intolerance and hateful acts.”

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